



# THE BECERRA BULLETIN

*News and Views from Washington to Los Angeles*

April 29, 2008, WASHINGTON, D.C. — In a continued effort to bring news and relevant information about our federal government back to his home district in Los Angeles, Representative Xavier Becerra (CA-31), Assistant to the Speaker of the House and the only congressional member from Southern California who sits on the Ways and Means Committee, brings you "The Becerra Bulletin," an e-newsletter filled with facts and information meant to stimulate thought and discussion about American economic policy and a host of other issues.

## BY THE NUMBERS

### *MIDDLE CLASS SQUEEZE CONTINUES FOR AMERICA'S WORKING FAMILIES*

The past few months have seen America's economic crisis deepen, as prices rise, foreclosures increase, wages fall and good jobs become scarce. These economic pressures are putting a real squeeze on middle class families who, as their wages and job prospects decline, must pay more for basic necessities such as food, energy and gas. This strain, which hits working families the hardest, demands a second economic stimulus, growth and relief package. Democratic leaders in Congress are working in a bipartisan way to find solutions for the immediate crisis while looking toward finding long-term solutions for America's economic recovery. As Congress moves forward on setting a new direction for the economy, it's helpful to take stock of where we are. Here are the facts about the state of the U.S. economy:

### **RIISING COSTS FOR CONSUMERS IN THE FIRST THREE MONTHS OF 2008\***

<b>Increase in Consumer Price Index (CPI).....</b>	<b>3.1%</b>
<b>Increase in the cost of food.....</b>	<b>5.1%</b>
<b>Increase in the cost of energy.....</b>	<b>8.6%</b>
<b>Increase in the cost of gas.....</b>	<b>7.2%</b>

### **JOBS, WAGES, HOUSING, AND HEALTH STATISTICS WORSEN**

<b>Real wages compared to this time last year.....</b>	<b>-1.0%</b>
<b>Jobs lost so far in 2008.....</b>	<b>232,000</b>
<b>Number of Americans looking for work.....</b>	<b>7,800,000</b>
<b>Increase in health insurance premium costs since 2001.....</b>	<b>48%</b>
<b>Number of Americans without health insurance.....</b>	<b>47,000,000</b>
<b>Increase in the number of bankruptcy filings since 2007.....</b>	<b>38%</b>

\*Bureau of Labor Statistics, seasonally adjusted compound annual rates.

## SHORT TAKES — WASHINGTON, D.C.

### *REP. BECERRA INTRODUCES TAXPAYER BILL OF RIGHTS*

In an effort to better educate and empower America's taxpayers, Rep. Becerra introduced H.R. 5716, the Taxpayer Bill of Rights Act of 2008 on April 8, a week before Tax Day. "Tax season can be a daunting time for working families who are unfamiliar with our nation's complicated tax code — and sadly there are unscrupulous individuals willing to take advantage of hardworking taxpayers," Rep. Becerra said after introducing the bill. "This simple, common sense legislation would clarify the rights and responsibilities of all taxpayers in a single document, while improving taxpayer services and providing better regulation and oversight of tax preparers." The bill would require the Treasury Department to publish in the tax code an easy-to-understand Taxpayer Bill of Rights. This publication would state each right and obligation and list its corresponding location in the tax code. Other important provisions from H.R. 5716, including increased funding for Volunteer Income Tax Assistance programs, Low-Income Taxpayer Clinics, and other programs were incorporated into the Taxpayer Assistance and Simplification Act, which passed the House on April 15.

## SHORT TAKES — LOS ANGELES

### *REP. BECERRA HOLDS EDUCATIONAL "TAX TIME" PRESS CONFERENCE*

On March 27, with Tax Day just weeks away, Rep. Becerra hosted a "tax time" press conference to educate taxpayers on how to receive economic stimulus payments, earned income tax credits, and free tax preparation assistance. City Councilwoman Jan Perry, State Controller John Chiang, and representatives from the Greater L.A. EITC Campaign Partnership echoed Rep. Becerra's message about the importance of taking advantage of the free resources available to taxpayers during tax season. To can watch the press conference online by clicking on "Becerra Broadcasts" at <http://Becerra.House.Gov>.

**Representative Xavier Becerra, 31st Congressional District, California**

**Assistant to the Speaker of the House of Representatives**

Committee on Ways and Means

Subcommittee on Oversight, Subcommittee on Health & Subcommittee on Social Security

Committee on Budget

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